

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PARRY  
PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING MEETINGS WITH KOREAN OFFICIALS  
SEOUL, KOREA  
APRIL 21, 1994

1           (The press conference convened at 0916 hours, 21 April  
2 1994.)

3           MS. DeLASKI:     Okay. He will make an opening statement  
4 for you and then he will take some of your questions before we go  
5 off to visit some troops. So with that, I give you Dr. Perry.

6           (Translation by the interpreter.)

7           MR. PERRY:       Good morning. My visit to the Republic  
8 of Korea is at a time of high political tension, but I want to  
9 emphasize that there is not high military tension. That  
10 is--please.

11          (Translation by the interpreter.)

12          MR. PERRY:       That is, there is no imminent danger of a  
13 military confrontation on the Korean peninsula. This is my  
14 judgment and it's also the judgment of your Minister of National  
15 Defense Rhee.

16          (Translation by the interpreter.)

17          MR. PERRY:       What talk you hear of occasionally in the  
18 media of war is, I think, entirely inappropriate.

19          (Translation by the interpreter.)

20          MR. PERRY:       Certainly it is true that the United  
21 States will not initiate a war.

22          (Translation by the interpreter.)

23          MR. PERRY:       The United States will not provoke a war  
24 by any rash actions on the peninsula.

25          (Translation by the interpreter.)

1 MR. PERRY: Indeed, all of our efforts have been  
2 directed to diffuse the political tension through patient  
3 diplomatic actions.

4 (Translation by the interpreter.)

5 MR. PERRY: And that while we will not provoke a war,  
6 the United States also will not invite a war.

7 (Translation by the interpreter.)

8 MR. PERRY: That is, we will not invite a war by  
9 showing a lack of commitment to the Republic of Korea, by showing  
10 a lack of solidarity with the Republic of Korea, or by showing a  
11 lack of readiness.

12 (Translation by the interpreter.)

13 MR. PERRY: To put that same point in a more positive  
14 way, I am here to affirm, to reaffirm, the commitment of the  
15 United States to the security of the Republic of Korea--

16 (Translation by the interpreter.)

17 MR. PERRY: --to assure the solidarity between the  
18 United States and the Republic of Korea--

19 (Translation by the interpreter.)

20 MR. PERRY: --and to assure the readiness of our  
21 combined forces.

22 (Translation by the interpreter.)

23 MR. PERRY: I had several very specific objectives  
24 for making this trip this week.

25 (Translation by the interpreter.)

1 MR. PERRY: First of all, I wanted to establish a  
2 friendship and mutual understanding between your Minister of  
3 National Defense Rhee and myself.

4 (Translation by the interpreter.)

5 MR. PERRY: We both came into office just a few  
6 months ago and because of the significance of this defense  
7 alliance and the crisis on the peninsula caused by the North  
8 Korean pursuit of a nuclear weapon, we felt that it was important  
9 that we talk at this time and we meet face to face.

10 (Translation by the interpreter.)

11 MR. PERRY: I also wanted to obtain a firsthand  
12 appraisal of our defense planning and the readiness of our  
13 forces, and by "our" forces I mean the Republic of Korea and  
14 United States combined forces.

15 (Translation by the interpreter.)

16 MR. PERRY: And, finally, through consultations with  
17 Minister Rhee and other senior Republic of Korea leaders, I  
18 wanted to exchange views with them on how the United States and  
19 the Republic of Korea jointly assessed the problems in security  
20 and ensure that we have a common strategy to deal with them.

21 (Translation by the interpreter.)

22 MR. PERRY: Minister Rhee and I have made  
23 arrangements to establish classified telephones on our desks so  
24 that we can continue our communications on a frequent basis and  
25 I've also invited Minister Rhee to come to Washington at an early

1 date to continue our security dialogue.

2 (Translation by the interpreter.)

3 MR. PERRY: I can report to you that after intensive  
4 discussions with Minister Rhee, Foreign Minister Han, National  
5 Security Advisor Chang, and President Kim Yong Sam, that I  
6 believe there is solid agreement among all of us on a joint  
7 strategy regarding the North Korean nuclear issue and on how to  
8 maintain a deterrent posture in force readiness while we attempt  
9 to resolve this nuclear issue through diplomacy.

10 (Translation by the interpreter.)

11 MR. PERRY: I want to comment briefly on the Team  
12 Spirit agreement which was released yesterday.

13 (Translation by the interpreter.)

14 MR. PERRY: Minister Rhee and I agreed that while we  
15 have resumed planning so that Team Spirit '94 can be held in  
16 November, we are still willing to suspend this defensive exercise  
17 in the context of implementation of arrangements for a third  
18 round of talks between the United States and the Democratic  
19 People's Republic of Korea. In short, we still hope that  
20 diplomacy will work.

21 (Translation by the interpreter.)

22 MR. PERRY: Today I will go, accompanied by Minister  
23 Rhee and Chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Lee, to  
24 visit some Republic of Korea and United States military units.

25 (Translation by the interpreter.)

(5)

1199

1 MR. PERRY: I am confident that this visit will  
2 verify the findings I've made to date of a strong and close  
3 defence alliance between our two countries.

4 (Translation by the interpreter.)

5 MR. PERRY: I am going to open for questions now. I  
6 would like to alternate between questions from Korean reporters  
7 and American reporters who are here. Let me start off with a  
8 question from a Korean reporter.

9 (Translation by the interpreter.)

10 (Mr. Song, Korea Daily News)

11 (Translation of reporter by interpreter.)

12 MR. SONG: Last month, Secretary Perry, you met with  
13 the press people and said that in addition to the force  
14 augmentation of the U.S. forces in Korea, you will be  
15 transferring military equipment to the Republic of Korea forces  
16 to augment their vulnerabilities. And you also mentioned that  
17 you will discuss these matters with General Luck when you visit  
18 in April, Korea, and I understand that there has been some  
19 concrete discussions of the possible transfer of the U.S. modern  
20 technology equipment to Korea.

21 Can you elaborate on that?

22 MR. PERRY: We had discussions both with General Luck  
23 and with Minister Rhee about the progress of the modernization of  
24 the Republic of Korea forces here. There have been many  
25 important improvements made over the last--initiated over the

1 last 6 to 12 months by the Republic of Korea, improvements which  
2 we felt were very important to strengthening the readiness of the  
3 Korean forces on the peninsula.

4 We also discussed measures that involved assistance from  
5 the U.S.. We discussed the, what I would call, pre-positioning  
6 of equipment.

7 As some of you, perhaps, know, we decided in our  
8 bottoms-up review last year, which was our basic planning  
9 document, that we should put a greater emphasis on having  
10 equipment pre-positioned in ships. And the equipment on those  
11 ships, which would be the heavy equipment that goes for armored  
12 brigades, for example, would be available to Korea in the event  
13 of any military crisis here.

14 Charlie--

15 JAIME McINTYRE: There needs to be a translation.

16 (Translation by the interpreter.)

17 CHARLIE ALDINGER: Dr. Perry, I'd like to ask you  
18 about another area of the world which you would probably agree  
19 that is another area of both political and military crisis, and  
20 that's Bosnia.

21 President Clinton said today that the U.S.--the new  
22 U.S./UN plan would create a Sarajevo-like cocoon, perhaps,  
23 cluttered around six of the enclaves--of the six enclaves in  
24 Bosnia. The Serbs have not shown any steps to be cooperative.  
25 Would you rule out as part of that plan any strategic strikes

1 The exact details of how the plan is to be worked out remain  
2 ahead of us yet.

3 (Translation by the interpreter.)

4 (Mr. Lee, Hankgorya Daily News.)

5 (Translation of reporter by interpreter.)

6 MR. LEE: Mr. Secretary, as the problem solver for  
7 war and peace, I hope you make a lot of contributions during your  
8 tenure.

9 My first question is concerning your recent newspaper  
10 interview in which you said that in order to prevent a North  
11 Korean nuclear program you will take the risk of experiencing  
12 another war in the Korean peninsula, if that is necessary, to  
13 prevent from North Korea--North Korea from developing nuclear  
14 weapons.

15 Does that mean that North Korea now has the  
16 weapon--nuclear weapon or does that translate that they still do  
17 not have any nuclear weapons?

18 Number 2 is concerning Patriot deployment. As you know,  
19 in Korea there are some Congressmen and some opposition leaders  
20 and some students' groups who are against deployment of the  
21 Patriot missile to Korea, and if the tension on the Korean  
22 peninsula decreases, does that mean that you will be able to--  
23 That was the third question. The second question was, was there  
24 any discussion about possible procurement by the Korean  
25 government of the Patriot system for improving the defense of the

1 against Serbian targets, such as ammunition and fuel dumps and  
2 supply lines to stand behind the threat?

3 (Translation by the interpreter.)

4 MR. PERRY: The plan or the proposal made by  
5 President Clinton involves creating an exclusion zone around the  
6 safe haven areas, and in this exclusion zone any heavy weapons  
7 that are found will be subject to air attack by the NATO Air  
8 Force.

9 In the course of this attack, it is proposed, also, that  
10 related targets could also be attacked, including ammunition  
11 dumps or supply areas. So, it is broader in that extent--to that  
12 extent than the Sarajevo model.

13 I should mention, parenthetically, that in preparation of  
14 this area of our plan, it was always envisioned that that would  
15 be a backup tactic, if necessary, in Sarajevo. We have never had  
16 to apply that air strike to Sarajevo so we have never had a  
17 chance to see whether it was necessary to extend it beyond the  
18 specific heavy weapon that was firing. But that was part of that  
19 Sarajevo concept to begin with.

20 In terms of-- So, yes, that is--that is considered. It  
21 differs from the Sarajevo plan-- I think that's all I'll say  
22 about it right now. The important point to make at this stage is  
23 that the proposal has been sent to the allies who would be  
24 involved both in executing in the air and who would be affected  
25 on the ground, and that's under intensive discussion right now.



1 Korean forces?

2 And number three was, if the situation in Korea enhances,  
3 will the U.S. consider withdrawal of the Patriot systems?

4 And the number four question is, there are many  
5 misunderstandings amongst Korean people about your role as the  
6 Secretary of Defense, that is an arms seller. So, during this  
7 visit to Korea, has there been any discussion about the selling  
8 of the weapons system to the Republic of Korea?

9 MR. PERRY: You've got an awful lot in one question.  
10 I'll see if I can deal briefly with each of those points.

11 (Translation by the interpreter.)

12 MR. PERRY: First of all, we intend to pursue  
13 diplomacy, firmly and patiently, until or unless there is no hope  
14 for success of diplomacy anymore.

15 (Translation by the interpreter.)

16 MR. PERRY: And if that happens, then we and the  
17 Republic of Korea, together, would go to the United Nations and  
18 propose that sanctions be imposed on North Korea.

19 (Translation by the interpreter.)

20 MR. PERRY: Secondly, in terms of the Patriot, it is  
21 a purely defensive system. It is a system that has no offensive  
22 capability at all and it is a part of a regular modernization  
23 program. It has been planned, actually, for several years and  
24 there's no reason to withdraw it. It's not here because of the  
25 nuclear weapon program. It is designed to defend against

1 conventional SCUD attacks on airfields and ports and other  
2 military installations.

3 (Translation by the interpreter.)

4 MR. PERRY: Third, let me make a point very clear, my  
5 responsibility as Secretary of Defense is not to be a salesman  
6 for U.S. equipment.

7 (Translation by the interpreter.)

8 MR. PERRY: My responsibility is to provide for the  
9 joint readiness of the combined forces here in Korea to defend  
10 this country.

11 (Translation by the interpreter.)

12 MR. PERRY: Most specifically, I have, at no time in  
13 this meeting, including my meeting with Minister Rhee, I did not  
14 discuss the procurement of the Patriot by Korea.

15 (Translation by the interpreter.)

16 MR. PERRY: Nor did I discuss the procurement of any  
17 other American system by the Republic of Korea.

18 (Translation by the interpreter.)

19 MR. PERRY: Finally, on the question of the--whether  
20 the North Koreans have zero or 1 or 2 bombs, let me see if I can  
21 clarify that some.

22 (Translation by the interpreter.)

23 MR. PERRY: Because of the secret--secretive nature  
24 of the North Korean government and society, it is difficult to  
25 make fully confident estimates on every aspect of the North

1 Korean military forces.

2 (Translation by the interpreter.)

3 MR. PERRY: I will tell you, first of all, what we  
4 know with full confidence, and that is that North Korea has a  
5 major nuclear weapon program underway.

6 (Translation by the interpreter.)

7 MR. PERRY: We don't have the details of all of the  
8 components of this program, but we know it includes a 25 mega  
9 watt reactor, a 200 mega watt reactor under construction, a radio  
10 chemistry laboratory, and high explosive testing facility.

11 (Translation by the interpreter.)

12 MR. PERRY: The only plausible explanation of these  
13 facilities is a major nuclear weapons program.

14 (Translation by the interpreter.)

15 MR. PERRY: To have a complete nuclear weapons  
16 program there have to be other components as well, which we do  
17 not have detailed information about.

18 (Translation by the interpreter.)

19 MR. PERRY: Within weeks it will be necessary for the  
20 North Koreans to remove the fuel, which is now in their 25 mega  
21 watt reactor.

22 (Translation by the interpreter.)

23 MR. PERRY: This fuel would provide sufficient  
24 plutonium to make 4 or 5 nuclear bombs.

(Translation by the interpreter.)

1 MR. PERRY: We believe that it is critical that that  
2 operation be supervised closely by the Atomic Energy--  
3 International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

4 (Translation by the interpreter.)

5 MR. PERRY: At an earlier date, the North Koreans  
6 removed a smaller amount of fuel from this reactor.

7 (Translation by the interpreter.)

8 MR. PERRY: We know that it was removed, but because  
9 they did it, not under supervision, in fact, they did it without  
10 observation at the time, we can only estimate how much fuel was  
11 removed.

12 (Translation by the interpreter.)

13 MR. PERRY: We estimate that there was enough  
14 plutonium in that fuel to make 1 or 2 bombs.

15 (Translation by the interpreter.)

16 MR. PERRY: We estimate that they probably have the  
17 capability to convert that plutonium into bombs.

18 (Translation by the interpreter.)

19 MR. PERRY: And we estimate that they have had enough  
20 time by now to have succeeded in doing that.

21 (Translation by the interpreter.)

22 MR. PERRY: Recently, Kim Woo Song made a statement  
23 which we welcome, that North Korea has no bombs, no nuclear  
24 bombs, no aspirations for nuclear bombs, and no secrets about  
25 their nuclear bomb program.

1 (Translation by the interpreter.)

2 MR. PERRY: We call on him to allow the inspection of  
3 the International Atomic Energy Agency so they can verify that  
4 assertion as so it can remove the uncertainty in our present  
5 estimates.

6 (Translation by the interpreter.)

7 MR. PERRY: Jaime.

8 MS. DeLASKI: I'm afraid Jaime is going to be the last  
9 one.

10 JAIME MCINTYRE: Okay, well then I'll have to ask  
11 you about Bosnia if it's the last question.

12 Often at the Pentagon we've been given the rationale for  
13 why the Sarajevo model might not apply to Gorazde, the small unit  
14 fighting, the difficulty of targets, the lack of ground troops to  
15 support the agreement. What has changed the thinking about that  
16 And the second part is will you then have to make adjustments in  
17 numbers of ground troops, planes, or equipment to carry out this  
18 proposal, if it's agreed to by the allies?

19 (Translation by the interpreter.)

20 MR. PERRY: First of all, let me clarify a point  
21 which is that the role of the United States in Bosnia is not as  
22 a combatant power. We are there to assist the peace-keeping  
23 efforts going on by the United Nations.

24 (Translation by the interpreter.)

25 MR. PERRY: There has been real momentum in those

1 peace-keeping efforts during the last 2 months with the ultimatum  
2 on Sarajevo, with the agreements in the Criansa (sic), and with  
3 the peace agreement between--the tentative peace agreement  
4 between the Croats and the Muslims.

5 (Translation by the interpreter.)

6 MR. PERRY: The Serbs shelling and assault on Gorazde  
7 has been a real setback to the momentum of these peace  
8 agreements.

9 (Translation by the interpreter.)

10 MR. PERRY: President Clinton's proposal is an  
11 attempt to regain the momentum and to get back to the peace  
12 agreement, the cessation of hostilities and the peace agreements.

13 (Translation by the interpreter.)

14 MR. PERRY: It is still not a decision for the United  
15 States to become a combatant in the war.

16 (Translation by the interpreter.)

17 MR. PERRY: It's still limited to a U.S. and NATO  
18 role as assisting in peace-keeping.

19 (Translation by the interpreter.)

20 MR. PERRY: It's still limited to the use of air  
21 power. There is no decision in this proposal to use U.S. or NATO  
22 ground combatant forces.

23 (Translation by the interpreter.)

24 MR. PERRY: And it is still not a proposal for  
25 unilateral action. Whatever we're doing in Bosnia, we have to

1 take full account of the danger to the ground troops, UN ground  
2 troops there, and any proposal has to be clearly coordinated with  
3 the allies, both in the air and on the ground.

4 (Translation by the interpreter.)

5 MR. PERRY: Now with that background, let me try to  
6 answer your question.

7 (Translation by the interpreter.)

8 MR. PERRY: The-- With those limitations, it is  
9 clear that this proposal, even if accepted, will not guarantee  
10 the security of the safe haven areas.

11 (Translation by the interpreter.)

12 MR. PERRY: But it will be very effective in reducing  
13 the shelling that goes on into these cities and it will be very  
14 effective in raising the price to the Serbs of continuing the  
15 shelling.

16 (Translation by the interpreter.)

17 MR. PERRY: The real hope, real expectation, is that  
18 this action will not be a decisive military action affecting the  
19 battles going on into safe areas, but it will provide the impetus  
20 to get back to the discussions, to get back to the cessation of  
21 hostilities agreement and finally to a peace agreement in Bosnia.

22 (Translation by the interpreter.)

23 MR. PERRY: It is still a limited action dedicated to  
24 supporting peace-keeping and if it is not successful, then we  
25 will have to consider other actions.

1 (Translation by the interpreter.)

2 MR. PERRY: But we believe that when both combatants  
3 on the ground, the Muslims and the Serbs, consider the situation  
4 and consider the extent to which this dramatically increased use  
5 of air power can affect it, that both sides will be willing to  
6 agree to a cessation of hostilities.

7 (Translation by the interpreter.)

8 MR. PERRY: Finally, we do not see the requirement  
9 for additional air power beyond what we already have in the  
10 Adriatic and Aviano to carry out this ultimatum. We do believe  
11 that additional United Nations peace-keeping forces will be  
12 needed to go into the safe haven areas.

13 (Translation by the interpreter.)

14 MR. PERRY: Thank you very much.

15 (The press conference adjourned at 0955 hours, 21 April  
16 1994.)



WASHINGTON POST

Apr. 21, 1994

Pg. 1/18

# U.S.-South Korean Exercise Put Off as Gesture to North

*Cancellation Possible if Nuclear-Site Check Allowed*

By R. Jeffrey Smith  
Washington Post Staff Writer

SEOUL, April 21 (Thursday)—The government announced Wednesday that a major U.S.-South Korean military exercise will be deferred until late this year and could be canceled altogether as a gesture of goodwill to North Korea in exchange for a new international inspection of North Korean nuclear facilities.

The announcement followed a 90-minute private meeting here between South Korean Defense Minister Rhee Byong Tae and Defense Secretary William J. Perry, who told reporters outside the Defense Ministry that he felt "complete solidarity" with the South Korean position on the exercise and many other military matters.

The decision to put off the exercise, called "Team Spirit," until what the government called "the November time frame" is meant to avoid provoking North Korea while U.S. and South Korean diplomats are trying to persuade the hard-line Stalinist state to allow

full inspection of its declared nuclear facilities. Washington is hoping to renew a dialogue with mid-level North Korean diplomats about the inspection within the next week or so, a senior administration official said.

North Korea has denounced past Team Spirit exercises as an unwarranted preparation for military attack and threatened to respond by halting any dialogue on nuclear issues. But U.S. and South Korean officials declared in February that the exercise would go forward after North Korea kept international inspectors from seeing all portions of a nuclear complex that could be used to develop a nuclear arsenal.

South Korean officials publicly attributed the delay to a need to safeguard freshly planted rice seedlings in areas around Seoul where the exercise is usually conducted by nearly 100,000 troops. But they acknowledged it could have been scaled back to curtail the disruption.

Perry's decision to back the delay—in the middle of a vocal campaign by him to boost the readiness of forces here to defend

against a North Korean attack—reflects Washington's underlying desire to avoid any immediate confrontation over the nuclear issue, U.S. officials said. It sets a timetable for Team Spirit roughly on a par with a six-month deadline for the inspections that Perry recently set and Secretary of State Warren Christopher endorsed.

But it also reflects the view of many U.S. officials that holding Team Spirit will not add many military skills to those already provided by a busy schedule of smaller and lesser-known joint exercises here. Perry is slated to witness one such exercise this afternoon.

Perry, in a March 30 interview, said he was focusing on what "we need to do to provide the readiness for our forces if standing firm does lead to a war, or providing the readiness which might deter a war. Of those issues, Team Spirit is very far down on the list."

Among the issues Perry said he intended to raise during his two-day visit here was his desire to see South Korea boost spending on modern weapons systems such as counter-artillery radar, tactical helicopters and advanced antitank munitions. But South Korea largely preempted the discussion by publicly announcing a decision to accelerate its purchases of some of these weapons.

Col. Park Sung Hun, chief of combat intelligence for South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters that improvements will soon be made in night-fighting operations, special forces equipment and communications gear. But he did not give details or timing. One U.S. official said the pledge represented "progress" but appeared to fall short of the commitments Washington is seeking.

South Korea's reluctance to do more at Washington's behest is partly because of the absence of great alarm among many officials here about North Korea's nuclear program. While Perry and President Clinton have both said the program must be stopped—even at the risk of war—Vice Minister of Defense Chung Jung Ho told reporters Wednesday that "the tense situation . . . is not a military crisis, but rather a political crisis" to be resolved through dialogue.

In an implicit rebuke of Washington's recent tough talk and calls for action, Chung added that "the military situation is much more stable than it appears from the outside, and the Korean people can go about their lives without major concerns." One U.S. official expressed surprise at Chung's remark, while another said his message may have been meant to reassure local citizenry alarmed even by a remote chance of war.

U.S. officials said that during meetings today with President Kim Young Sam and Foreign Minister Han Sung Joo, Perry got into the same spirit and repeatedly emphasized Washington's enthusiasm for diplomacy and its commitment not to initiate hostile action against North Korea. They said Perry even instructed aides that, to avoid inflaming North Korea, he was not to be photographed near a "threatening" piece of military hardware.

WASHINGTON TIMES Apr. 22, 1994 Pg. 1

# North Korea soon will have fuel for 4 nukes

## Perry plays down war danger

By Robert Burns  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEOUL — North Korea may be ready within weeks to remove enough plutonium from its nuclear reactor to build four or five nuclear bombs, but "there is no imminent danger" of war, Defense Secretary William Perry said yesterday.

Mr. Perry speaking at a news conference before flying to Tokyo for consultations with Japanese officials, also said U.S. Patriot mis-

siles arriving in South Korea will be ready for firing within a week.

Washington and Seoul do not expect the nuclear dispute with North Korea to escalate into a direct military confrontation, Mr. Perry said, but he told reporters the problem soon will reach a critical turning point.

Mr. Perry said "within weeks it will be necessary" for North Korean nuclear technicians to remove the fuel rods from a reactor. The fuel rods have been used so long they will need to be replaced

with new ones, although it has never been clear exactly when the refueling would be done.

The spent fuel will contain enough plutonium to build four or five nuclear bombs, Mr. Perry said, but he noted that North Korean leader Kim Il-sung recently denied any intention to build nuclear weapons. The fuel rods would have to cool for weeks or months before they could be processed to remove the plutonium.

Because the defueling of the reactor will give North Korea an opportunity to expand its supply of plutonium, Mr. Perry said, "it is critical" that North Korea permit the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to monitor the defueling.

As if to respond to that concern, the IAEA said yesterday in Vienna, Austria, that North Korean officials have indicated they might accept international inspections "under certain conditions."

But it was not clear whether North Korea would allow the access necessary to determine whether it illicitly diverted nuclear material that could be used in nuclear weapons.

"We want to specify clearly what [inspectors] would do, where they would go, when they would go, where they would stay," agency spokesman David Kyd said.

Mr. Perry did not predict that North Korea would build additional nuclear weapons, but his remarks about the reactor defueling process were more specific and pointed than any previous comments by Clinton administration officials.

Mr. Perry spent two days in Seoul visiting U.S. and South Korean troops and discussing the North Korean nuclear problem with South Korean and American officials. He also discussed ways of improving South Korea's military capabilities, especially its ability to operate air and ground forces at night.

Aboard his plane to Tokyo yesterday, Mr. Perry told reporters, "I came away with a very good feeling" about Seoul's commitment to strengthening its defenses.

In Tokyo, Mr. Perry was scheduled to meet last night with Japanese Defense Minister Kazuo Aichi and hold talks today with Foreign Minister Tsutomu Hata. He will also give a speech on East

Asian affairs before returning to Washington.

At the news conference, Mr. Perry said recent public speculation about North Korea going to war over the nuclear problem has been exaggerated and unhelpful.

"What talk you hear occasionally in the media of war is, I think, entirely inappropriate," he said. "There is no imminent danger of a military confrontation on the Korean Peninsula."

Mr. Perry said the United States has no intention of using military force against North Korea unless Mr. Kim's forces attack South Korea, where about 37,000 U.S. Army and Air Force troops are permanently stationed under a treaty that commits the United States to defending the South.

"The United States will not initiate a war," Mr. Perry said. "The United States will not provoke a war by any rash actions on the peninsula." He added that America will "not invite a war" by lessening its commitment to South Korean security.

Mr. Perry's visit to South Korea coincided with the arrival of six batteries of U.S. Army Patriot air defense missiles, which are being deployed to protect military bases, ports and unspecified "facilities" from a ballistic missile attack from North Korea. The North has Scud missiles with enough range to hit virtually any target on the Korean Peninsula.

Mr. Perry said U.S. and South Korea forces will go ahead in November with a major military exercise, Team Spirit, unless North Korea drops its objection to a full international inspection of its nuclear facilities.